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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

THE CURRENT FOCUS OF THE NEAR EAST CRISIS

State Department review completed

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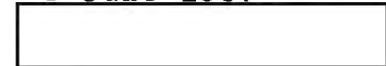


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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
3 June 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Current Focus of the Near East Crisis

Summary

Reporting during the past few days has focused on two primary aspects of the Near East crisis. One is the rapidly growing belief in Israel that time is running out, and that if Israel is not to suffer an ultimately fatal defeat it must very soon either strike or obtain absolutely iron-clad security assurances from the West. The second aspect is the rise of a euphoric, band-wagon spirit among the Arab States, leading even moderate Arabs to believe that the time may in fact have come when the Arabs can close in on Israel with some hope of success. There are in addition a number of reports indicating that anti-US actions are being planned, to be put in motion if the US moves to frustrate what the Arabs now tend to see as a "victory."

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1. All reporting from Israel shows mounting pressure for a "decision." The popular applause greeting General Moshe Dayan's appointment as defense minister--"go, go Moshe"--indicates that the mood is strongly "action." Dayan's appointment should assure that the "hawks" accept decisions of the coalition government more readily than they otherwise would, but it also indicates that Prime Minister Eshkol has suffered a setback and must adapt his policy to the views of the tough-minded military whom Dayan represents.

2. The Israeli military

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have already shown apprehension over the consequences of extended delay. The Egyptians have been permitted to make an orderly build-up of ground forces in Sinai

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3. The Arabs are sniffing blood. So fast and far does Nasir's band-wagon seem to be rolling that even the Iranian government, long friendly to Israel and bitterly hostile to Nasir, has been compelled to issue a statement mouthing phrases about Muslim solidarity. Tunisian President Bourguiba, the only "Arab" leader in recent years to suggest publicly some modus vivendi with Israel, has also had his government say that it stands behind, though evidently not with, Nasir.

4. The Arabs evidently expect that the US and the UK will come to Israel's rescue, and are doing some planning for this eventuality.

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5. The range of Arab reaction in the event of US and UK intervention, or indeed before such a development, is indicated not only by public threats to close the Suez Canal, to destroy Western oil assets.

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Terrorist bombing against US offices in Saudi Arabia was resumed on 2 June. Meanwhile, the US Embassy in Kuwait has reported that it assesses the possibility of an oil shutdown there as more real than it had been earlier in the crisis. In Libya, the present mood is that the US base at Wheelus would be closed.

6. Although the tenor of many of the anti-US pronouncements suggests that they are being issued more to head off pro-Nasir pressures than to express actual intentions, there seems to be a real danger in the cumulative effect of the threats. In countries where there are obvious and available targets other than oil or military installations--e.g., the American University of Beirut, US or UK airline and branch bank offices--these might be subjected to direct attack even before Arab governments moved in on oil or base installations where their own interests are more heavily engaged.

7. In less tangible terms, the damage to the US position in the area already appears serious. During the past twenty years, a generation of Arab youth have grown to maturity under bombardment of the idea that Israel would not exist if the US had not created it. This conviction is hardening, and is reflected in the new, rude frankness with which Arab leaders talk to our representatives, as well as in such out-of-the-way items as a Sudanese editorial calling for local enforcement of the Arab boycott against Ford and Coca Cola. These things are not serious in themselves--and some of the editorials and demonstrations are no doubt paid for by the Egyptians or Soviets--but they are pointers of the way in which minds are moving as the crisis deepens.

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8. Nor are hardening attitudes toward the US limited to the Arabs. In Israel, particularly among the hawks, there is a rising chorus of sentiment which sees Washington as holding Israel back and thereby selling the Israelis out. This is the other side of the general belief in Israel that only the Israelis really know how to deal with the Arabs and could do so successfully were it not for US pressures.

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